

Adventure Hitchhiking During Golden Week



children of a couple who took me to a parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway.

Trip 1: From Niigata to Osaka

Japan enjoys a string of holidays from April 29 to May 5th known as [Golden Week](#). I took advantage of this time to travel.

On May 2, 2010, I hitchhiked to Osaka from Niigata, a distance of 585 kilometers in 10 cars. Five of the cars were married couples and three of them had small children in the back seat. During holidays like Golden Week and [Obon](#) in August, I often get picked up by families visiting their hometowns. Sometimes they have the family dog with them. In the back seat of the seventh car was a beautiful three-year-old Golden Retriever named Mary.



The children's
parents

At the Amagozen parking area in Ishikawa Prefecture after waiting for an hour for a car, **I was asked to leave** by one of the parking attendants! He told me I couldn't hitchhike there. It is extremely rare for me to be asked to leave an expressway parking area, and I have no choice but to comply. It was still only a little over halfway to my destination and didn't have enough money to take a bus or train the rest of the way to Osaka.

The parking attendant told me where I could catch a bus from within the parking area. I walked halfway toward it, saw a man, and making eye contact with him, I told him I wanted to go to Osaka. He asked where in Osaka. Anywhere I said. It turned out the man was going exactly to the very parking area in Osaka I wanted to get off at, the Sakae Parking area! He is a rather well-to-do man, a company president owning 3 companies, and his wife was in the back seat. I consider it a real miracle to run into him just when I needed a ride most desperately! We had a most pleasant conversation with him and his wife who happens to be Chinese from Taiwan! This was the second time today to ride with a foreigner. The wife of the driver in the previous

vehicle is from the Philippines.

Trip 2: From Osaka to Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka



Couple with two
year old daughter
who took me from
Osaka to Kyoto

On May 5th I traveled in 4 cars 273 kilometers from Osaka to the city of Hamamatsu in the Tokkai area of Japan. [Tokkai is famous for its earthquakes](#) and occasional tsunami. It also happens to be one of the most popular areas to live in Japan due to its warm and sunny weather throughout the year. Only this year I found it *unusually cold* during my previous trip last April. Where's "[global warming](#)" when you need it? I remember the Tokkai area being warmer in mid-winter than it was last April, and that was 25 years ago!

Three of the 4 cars were families, and two had young children in the car. The first car took me to the Katsugawa Service area just before Kyoto. Sometimes I have to wait a relatively long time just to get to the other side of a large city like Kyoto, but today I caught the second ride in a matter of minutes. An older couple took me to a parking area close to Nagoya.

The last driver was a father of 3 children and a minister of the [Tenrikyo faith](#), a religion that began in the city of Tenri Japan in 1838. Tenrikyo is unusual for Japan because it is neither Buddhist nor Shinto and is a monotheistic religion, a belief in only one God. It seems to have had a lot of influence from Christian missionaries to Japan.

[More about Tenrikyo.](#)

Trip 3: Hamamatsu to Tokyo



Three young men who took me to
Fujikawa near Mt. Fuji

The next day on May 6th I needed to go to Noda city in Chiba on the eastern side of Tokyo. I also had an appointment at 7 PM to meet a man in Otemachi, the heart of Tokyo, a man from the U.K. who wrote me during this trip and expressed interest in my website!

From Hamamatsu, it only took 3 cars to go to Tokyo. The first car was going the opposite direction toward Nagoya, but I grabbed it because the Hamanako Service area is only 8 kilometers from where I was at the Hamamatsu Nishi interchange, and it is very easy to walk to the side of this particular service area to catch traffic going the opposite way.



Mt. Fuji as seen from the Fujikawa
Service Area in Shizuoka

Three young men, all younger than my own two sons took me to the Fujikawa Service area. The view of Mt. Fuji today was better than I expected it to be. Normally the best time to see it is mid-winter when the sky is clearest with fewer clouds surrounding it.

The last car was elderly two ladies, one 75 years old, who took me to Yoga in Tokyo. I got to Tokyo by 4PM, and decided to use the extra time before the 7PM appointment to meet with my friends Steven and Teiko. and helped Teiko set up her own [WordPress blog](#). (Japanese only)



Mt. Fuji as seen
from Susuno
snapped from a
moving car.

Trip 4: The return home

May 7, 2010: Japan enjoyed good weather throughout the Golden Week holiday, but today was Friday, a regular work day, and the weather turned cloudy and raining. But the rain in the Kanto area of Tokyo was light and intermittent, and I had a fold-up umbrella that I usually carry. I decided to go home today to have a couple of days of rest before work on Monday at my new job. I'm so glad I did because it took me two days to recover from this trip! When I travel I usually feel great, but upon returning home it's as if God pulled out the plug and I'm exhausted.

The first vehicle from the Miyoshi Service area near Tokyo was a truck which is unusual on the expressway. Trucks don't usually pick me up, but perhaps this one did because I asked the rider in the parking area and he asked the driver. They took me as far as Kamisato in Saitama which is next to the border of Gunma and just before the junction of the Joshi'etsu expressway that goes to Nagano. Not many cars are going to Niigata from Kamisato. Most go only as far as Takasaki or Maebashi in Gunma, and many take the Joshin'etsu toward Karuizawa and Nagano city. I could catch a ride going that way, but it's a longer roundabout way to Niigata and would get me home later. I opted to go for the road and wait for the direct route.

After about an hour a man saw my Niigata sign and offered to take me as far as Sanjo city. This was great because Niigata city is only 40 kilometers further and I could take a train from that point. The man's name was Mr. Sato and he was talkative throughout the remaining 200 kilometers of the trip.